

What is claimed is:

1. A portable electronic device, comprising:  
a user interface adapted to be operated by a print-disabled individual;  
a memory that contains a database of content;  
a text-to-speech converter; and  
an audio output.
2. The device of claim 1 wherein the content comprises compressed audio format content files and compressed text format content files.
3. The device of claim 2 wherein the device is configured to decompress the text format content files and the text-to-speech converter is configured to deliver the decompressed text format content files in audio format in response to a user input.
4. The device of claim 2 wherein the text format content files have been pre-processed to filter material that is not necessary for text-to-speech conversion.
5. The device of claim 2 wherein each audio format content file and each text format content file is associated with at least one index file that is stored in the memory.

6. The device of claim 5 wherein, when a user selects an audio content format file, the text-to-speech converter is programmed to convert selected non-audio format information associated with the audio content format file into an audio format and present the converted selected information to the user as text-to-speech.
7. The device of claim 2, further comprising a decompression module that decompresses a user-selected compressed audio format content file or text format content file in real time during presentation of the file in audio format to a user.
8. The device of claim 1, further comprising a communication means that receives content updates from a remote computing device.
9. The device of claim 1, further comprising a processor programmed with time scale modification functions that adjust a delivery speed of the content when the content is presented to a user through the audio output.
10. The device of claim 1, further comprising a decryption module that, when a user selects a content file that is encrypted, decrypts the selected content file.
11. The device of claim 1 wherein the print-disabled individual is at least one of blind, visually impaired, dyslexic, or of less than complete literacy.

12. A content delivery system, comprising:

a server that includes a server content database and a server subscriber database;

and

one or more portable electronic devices, each portable electronic device in communication with the server,

wherein each portable electronic device includes:

a user interface adapted to be operated by a print-disabled individual,

a memory that contains a device content database,

a text-to-speech converter, and

an audio output.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein each portable electronic device is programmed to periodically communicate with the server, receive an update from the server content database, and update the device content database with the update from the server content database.

14. The system of claim 12 wherein the content database of the portable device comprises compressed audio format content files and text format content files.

15. The system of claim 14, further comprising an audio file generator in communication with the server, wherein the audio file generator pre-processes the compressed audio format content files.
16. The system of claim 12, further comprising at least one communications link between the server and a plurality of remote content providers, wherein at least a portion of the content in the server content database has been received from the plurality of remote content providers via the at least one communications link.
17. The system of claim 12 wherein each portable electronic device further comprises a processor programmed with time scale modification functions that adjust a delivery speed of content from the content information database when said content is presented to a user through the audio output.
18. A method of delivering content to a print-disabled or visually-impaired individual, comprising:
- providing an individual with a portable electronic device, wherein the device includes a user interface, a memory that contains text format content files and audio format content files, a text-to-speech converter for converting the text format content files to audio format, a processor programmed with time scale modification functions, and an audio output; and

periodically updating the memory with updated text format content files and updated audio format content files.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising pre-processing the audio format content files.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein at least one of the updated text format content files has been received from a remote content provider.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising providing the electronic device with at least one index file for each text format content file and audio format content file.

22. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of periodically updating is performed from a remote server via a communications link.

23. The method of claim 18 wherein the step of periodically updating is performed by providing the user with a replacement memory that contains the updated text format content files and audio format content files.

24. The method of claim 18, further comprising, in response to a request from a user to receive a content file, verifying that the user is authorized to receive the requested content file.

25. A user interface for a portable electronic device, comprising:
- at least one volume control;
  - a document library control;
  - a table of contents control for selecting a table of contents in the document library;
  - a document selection control; and
  - a plurality of navigation controls for navigating through the document library and through individual documents selected from the library.
26. The user interface of claim 25, further comprising at least one bookmark control.
27. The user interface of claim 25 wherein the plurality of navigation controls include a forward control and a back control.
28. The user interface of claim 25 wherein the plurality of navigation controls include a document start control and a document end control.
29. A database structure, comprising:
- a plurality of content files, wherein the content files include text format files and audio format files; and

a plurality of index files, wherein at least one index file is associated with one of the content files, and wherein the at least one index file includes data corresponding to a plurality of locations within the associated content file.

30. The database structure of claim 29 wherein each of the content files is associated with at least one library, and wherein each library includes a table of contents.

31. The database structure of claim 29 wherein each index file further includes data corresponding to a title of the associated content file.

32. The database structure of claim 29, further comprising at least one catalog file, wherein the catalog file includes data corresponding to a plurality of available content files.